

An optimist and a pessimist are walking home from shul. The pessimist says, "Oy! The state of the world today, things can't possibly get any worse!" The optimist says, "Don't be so negative, of course they can!"

Old joke sure. It's a big part of, if not the human condition, certainly the Jewish condition to be equally comfortable with optimism and pessimism. And with all the difficulties going on around the world, it's easy to become pessimistic.

However, this event makes me feel optimistic. Why? Because in the scheme of big difficulties it's a small *good* thing.

And small good things are mighty.

With apologies to all the learned scholars in the room who have done this next bit a heck of a lot better than I'm about to. *Melachim* contains, among other things, a story of an interaction between God and Elijah. Full of all the drama one might expect with meeting God.

As God passes by Elijah there's a great and strong wind but the verse is careful to say that God isn't in that great and strong wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but God isn't in the earthquake. And then a fire, but God's not there either. Instead after all the climatological and geological and volcanic fanfare, after all the heavy weather, there's a tiny sound. And it's said, that in that tiny sound is God.

Interpretations abound on these particular verses. For today's purposes I'll go with the simplest: which is that it's the little things. Or more specifically, that little things are indications of bigger ones. That's a pretty cool thought. A person or youth of the year honor is an indication of a strong mens club program. That club, an indication of strong congregations. Those congregations, of a strong conservative movement, which indicates a strong Jewish people.

This is a great honor. But more importantly, it's a small good thing. And so, makes me optimistic about where things are headed for all of us.

I want to thank everybody who's here today. My wife Kate and daughters Mimi and Olivia, my mother and father in law Tanya and Leo. I especially want to thank regional leadership, Steve Buxbaum, president of the BHBE men's club, and the rest of the club's members, Rabbi Nate Crane, Chazan Pavel Roytman, Cynthia Lerner and Jessica Littmann, BHBE president and EVP, and whoever else thought putting me up for this honor was a good idea. Me standing here just says that beyond optimism, a sense of humor is still a crucial part of being Jewish. And that's definitely a good thing. Anyway, I greatly appreciate it. Thank you.